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A Replication and Extension of 'Measuring advertising's effect on mental availability'.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. Nor does it, to the best of my knowledge, contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text. All substantive contributions by others to the work presented are clearly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

In order for brand advertising to be effective, it has to effect consumer memory (Barnard & Ehrenberg 1997; du Plessis 2005). There are various models and theories that seek to explain how advertising works, the publicity model suggests this is achieved through building and refreshing memory associations with the brand (Sharp 2010a). Being able to retrieve a brand name, or brand-related information from memory in buying situations underpins the concept of mental availability – which is defined as the propensity for a brand to be thought of or noticed in buying situations (Romaniuk & Sharp 2004b; Romaniuk 2013).

The focus of this thesis is on the measurement of mental availability in response to brand advertising, through a differentiated replication and extension of the work of Vaughan et al. (2021) and Vaughan (2016). To measure the effect of brand advertising on mental availability, Vaughan et al. (2021) used the Mental Availability (MA) Metrics. Created by Romaniuk (2013), the four MA Metrics quantify the size of a brand's associative network in consumer memory, relative to category competitors. The metrics are: Mental Market Share (MMS), Associative Penetration (Ab), Association Rate (Aw), and Share of Mind (SoM).

Answering the call from Vaughan et al. (2021) to replicate and extend their findings, this research addressed two methodological limitations of the prior work which utilised cross-sectional secondary data and advertising recognition measures as a proxy for advertising exposure. This research instead collected primary data with forced advertising exposure, and a longitudinal study design with the same respondents pre- and post-advertising exposure for a sample of 3,193 respondents (screened for category use), plus a control group of 217 unexposed respondents. A mid-sized target brand was selected for each category: financial services, on-demand streaming, chocolate, and coffee, and a real world (new to market) advertisement shown to respondents during a distractor task. Respondents were surveyed twice with

brand attribute questions: both pre-advertising exposure, and post-advertising exposure (for the main sample). These questions were used to calculate the MA Metrics at the aggregate level, as well as MMS and a new measure, Number of Associations (NOA) at the individual respondent level.

Key findings of this research include:

- Brand mental availability is affected by advertising exposure at the aggregate brand level, with the biggest change among brand non-users.
- The MA Metrics should be reported separately for brand users and non-users. The Share of Mind metric moves more for brand users, and Associative Penetration moves more for brand non-users.
- There is instability in Mental Market Share and Number of Associations across individuals after exposure to advertising. However, there are consistent, positive increases to these measures (on average) after advertising exposure.
- Using a combination of advertising recognition and correct branding does not sufficiently capture all who recognise an advertisement.

This research demonstrates that the MA Metrics are a suitable tool for measuring change in mental availability for brands following advertising. The patterns of change in the MA Metrics were consistent across the four categories used in this study (a many sets of data design) and with Vaughan (2016) as well as consistent with prior literature on brand usage bias.

As this study is the first of its kind to look at MMS at the individual respondent level, and explore a new measure of Number of Associations (NOA), it builds on the knowledge around the instability of brand attribute measures at the individual level (Barnard et al. 1986; Castleberry et al. 1994; Dall'Olmo Riley et al. 1997; Sharp 2002) and the role of advertising in building and refreshing relevant memories (Hartnett et al. 2021; Sharp 2010a). The exploration of advertising recognition measures as part of RQ3, should lead marketing practitioners and academics to question the suitability of such measures' ability to capture all who have recognised an advertisement.